



**KONAMI** **OFFICIAL COMIC BOOK**

TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION

# METAL GEAR SOLID®



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TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION

# METAL GEAR SOLID®



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**KONAMI**

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COLONEL I'VE  
REACHED THE TANK  
HANGAR AND GOT  
SOLID INTEL ON THE  
WHEREABOUTS OF A  
HOSTAGE: THE DARPA  
CHIEF'S BEING HELD IN  
THE FIRST FLOOR  
BASEMENT

GOOD WORK.  
THERE SHOULD  
BE A CARGO  
ELEVATOR THERE  
YOU CAN USE TO  
GET TO HIM.

AFFIRMATIVE,  
I'VE GOT A  
VISUAL ON THAT  
JUST GRABBING  
A FEW MORE  
SUPPLIES

COLONEL  
I FOUND SOME  
THERMAL  
GOOGLES IN A  
STOREROOM  
SHOULD HELP  
A LOT!

CEASING CODEC  
COMMUNICATIONS  
FOR THE  
MOMENT...

A dark, muscular figure, possibly a superhero or villain, is shown in a room. The figure is wearing a dark, textured suit or costume. The room has a blue ceiling and white walls. The figure is looking down and slightly to the left. A speech bubble is visible in the upper left corner of the image.

FIRST  
FLOOR  
BASEMENT,  
HERE I  
COME.



LOOK AT  
THE RADAR—  
IT'S PICKING  
UP THE DARPA  
CHIEF.

GOT IT, BUT  
THE DOOR'S  
LOCKED.



YOU'VE GOT  
TO FIND SOME  
WAY TO GET IN  
THERE, SNAKE.  
HURRY UP AND  
GET HIM OUT!



DON'T  
WORRY,  
COLONEL.  
I'LL GET  
HIM.



A WOMAN...  
MUST BE THE ONE  
I OVERHEARD THE  
GUARDS TALKING  
ABOUT



COULD  
THAT BE THE  
COLONEL'S  
NIECE...  
MERYL?



FIRST  
THINGS FIRST.  
I'VE GOT TO  
GET TO THE  
DARPA CHIEF  
NOW.



WHO...  
WHO ARE  
YOU?

I'M HERE  
TO SAVE YOU.  
YOU'RE THE  
DARPA CHIEF  
DONALD  
ANDERSON.  
RIGHT?

YOU'RE  
HERE TO SAVE  
ME. HUH? THEN  
HURRY UP AND  
GET ME OUT  
OF HERE.

FIRST, I  
WANT SOME  
INFORMATION  
ABOUT THE  
TERRORISTS.

THEY'RE  
THREATENING  
A NUCLEAR  
STRIKE. IS IT  
POSSIBLE?

YES... IT'S  
POSSIBLE.  
THEY COULD  
LAUNCH A  
NUKE.





BUT... THIS  
INSTALLATION  
IS FOR STORING  
DISMANTLED  
WARHEADS. THEY  
SHOULDN'T HAVE  
ACCESS TO A  
MISSILE

THAT'S JUST  
A COVER STORY.  
WE WERE ACTUALLY  
CONDUCTING EXERCISES  
WITH A NEW TYPE OF  
EXPERIMENTAL  
WEAPON... A TRULY  
HISTORIC  
WEAPON

WHAT?

"A WEAPON WITH THE ABILITY  
TO LAUNCH A PREEMPTIVE  
NUCLEAR STRIKE FROM ANY  
PLACE ON EARTH..."


"...A NUCLEAR-EQUIPPED  
WALKING BATTLE TANK



"METAL GEAR?  
IT CAN'T BE!"

"METAL GEAR IS OUR  
MOST CLASSIFIED  
BLACK PROJECT!  
HOW DID YOU KNOW?"





WE'VE HAD RUN-  
INS IN THE PAST. BUT  
I THOUGHT THE METAL  
GEAR PROJECT WAS  
SCRAPPED...

ON  
THE CONTRARY  
IT'S GROWN INTO A  
HUGE JOINT PROJECT  
BETWEEN ARMSTECH AND  
OURSELVES. BUT NOW  
THE TERRORISTS  
HAVE REX

REX?

METAL GEAR  
REX... THE NEW  
PROTOTYPE'S  
CODENAME. IT'S  
PROBABLY ALREADY  
BEEN ARMED WITH  
A WARHEAD.

HEY! SHUT  
UP IN THERE,  
WILL YA?

WHEW!



WHAT ABOUT ANTI-LAUNCH  
SAFETY MEASURES?  
SOME KIND OF  
DETONATION  
CODE...

YES YOU  
MEAN *PAL*. YOU  
NEED TO INPUT  
TWO DIFFERENT  
PASSWORDS TO  
LAUNCH

BAKER,  
THE PRESIDENT  
OF ARMSTECH  
KNOWS ONE  
AND I KNOW  
THE OTHER.

THE OTHER  
HOSTAGE!

THAT'S  
RIGHT...

BUT THEY  
FOUND OUT MY  
PASSWORD

YOU  
TALKED?

"PSYCHO MANTIS, ONE OF  
THE FOXHOUND MEMBERS,  
HAS PSYCHIC POWERS.

HE CAN READ PEOPLE'S  
MINDS. YOU CAN'T REGIST!"

"THIS IS BAD."



IT'S JUST  
A MATTER OF  
TIME BEFORE  
THEY GET BAKER'S  
TOO, BUT THERE  
IS ANOTHER  
WAY TO STOP  
A LAUNCH



CARD KEYS...  
YOU'LL NEED ALL  
THREE OF THEM, EVEN  
WITHOUT THE  
PASSWORDS YOU CAN  
JUST INSERT THE KEYS  
AND ENGAGE THE  
SAFETY LOCK

OKAY  
THREE CARD  
KEYS, SO  
WHERE ARE  
THEY?



BAKER SHOULD  
HAVE THEM. I  
HEARD THE GUARD  
SAY THEY MOVED HIM  
TO THE SECOND FLOOR  
BASEMENT. THEY SAID  
THEY CEMENTED OVER  
THE ENTRANCES  
THOUGH

THAT'S  
NOT GONNA  
STOP ME



WAIT! TAKE  
THIS... IT'S MY  
PAN CARD. IT'LL  
OPEN ANY LEVEL  
1 SECURITY  
DOOR

OK I'M  
GOING TO  
GET YOU OUT  
OF HERE





HEY! WHAT'S  
HAPPENING?

THE CHIEF...  
IT LOOKED  
LIKE A HEART  
ATTACK.

A HEART  
ATTACK?  
NO!

COLONEL,  
ARE YOU  
HIDING  
SOMETHING  
FROM ME?

ABSOLUTELY  
NOT! BUT THIS  
OP IS LEVEL RED...  
YOU'D NEED THE  
HIGHEST SECURITY  
CLEARANCE TO  
LEARN THE WHOLE  
STORY

I'M SUPPOSED  
TO BELIEVE THAT  
YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF  
THIS OP BUT DON'T  
HAVE COMPLETE  
ACCESS TO THE  
FILE?

I TOLD YOU:  
THE SECRETARY  
OF DEFENSE IS IN  
OPERATIONAL  
CONTROL. I'M  
JUST HERE AS  
SUPPORT.

SNAKE, WE  
DON'T HAVE TIME  
TO DEBATE. GET  
OUT THERE AND  
FIND PRESIDENT  
BAKER!

WHAT THE  
HELL?

OOF  
BACK  
LIGH





SO YOU  
KILLED THE  
CHIEF. YOU  
BASTARD!



LIQUID?  
NO... YOU'RE  
NOT.

IS THIS THE  
FIRST TIME YOU'VE  
EVER POINTED A  
GUN AT SOMEONE?  
YOUR HANDS ARE  
SHAKING

CAN YOU  
SHOOT ME  
ROOKIE?

CAREFUL,  
I'M NO  
ROOKIE!

LIAR... YOU  
HAVEN'T EVEN  
TAKEN THE SAFETY  
OFF. YOU'RE NOT  
ONE OF THEM.  
ARE YOU?

JUST OPEN  
THAT DOOR SO  
WE CAN GET THE  
HELL OUT OF  
HERE. YOU'VE  
GOT A CARD  
RIGHT?

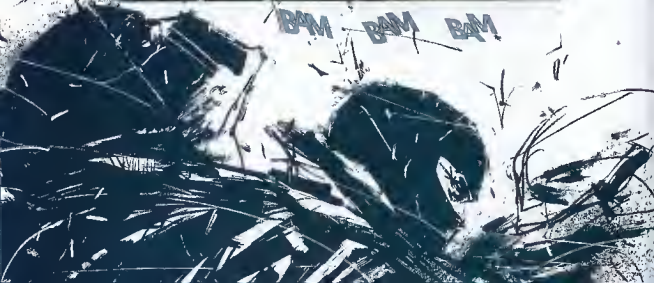




LOOKS  
LIKE WE'LL  
BE A LITTLE  
DELAYED!



HOPE  
YOU'RE READY  
FOR THIS...  
ROOKIE



BAM BAM BAM



KA-BLAM



THANKS  
FOR THE  
HELP.

WAIT!

WHO ARE  
YOU?

I'M  
SORRY,  
SIR.

YOU FOOL!  
YOU'VE *KILLED*  
HIM!

HIS MENTAL  
SHIELDING WAS  
VERY STRONG. I  
COULD NOT  
DIVE INTO HIS  
MIND.

NOW  
WE'LL *NEVER*  
GET THAT  
DETONATION  
CODE!

BOSS,  
I HAVE  
A GOOD  
IDEA....



BAM  
BAM

IT'S  
HER!

SLAM

GOOD  
GIRL...



JUST LIKE  
THAT

NAOMI...  
I JUST HAD  
SOME KIND OF  
HALLUCINATION

IT MUST  
HAVE BEEN  
PSYCHOMETRIC  
INTERFERENCE  
COMING FROM  
PSYCHO  
MANTIS.

SO  
THAT WAS  
MANTIS.

I'M ON MY  
WAY TO THE  
SECOND FLOOR  
BASEMENT TO  
GET BAKER

GO  
THROUGH  
THE ARMORY  
SNAKE. YOU  
CAN STOCK UP  
EVEN MORE  
THERE...



SOLITON  
RADAR SHOWS  
BAKER THAT WAY  
THIS MUST BE ONE  
OF THOSE CEMENTED  
OVER DOORWAYS  
ANDERSON  
MENTIONED

NOTHING  
A LITTLE C4  
WON'T TAKE  
CARE OF...



BADCOM





BAKER!  
BUT AM  
I TOO  
LATE?

KOFF!  
KOFF!

YOU'RE THE  
ARMSTECH  
PRESIDENT,  
RIGHT?

DON'T  
WORRY, I'M  
HERE TO  
SAVE YOU.

NOOOO!  
DON'T  
TOUCH  
IT!





...WHIMPER...

HE'S  
RIGHT. TOUCH  
THAT WIRE AND  
THE CA BLOWS  
EVERYONE  
SKY-HIGH

SO YOU'RE  
THE ONE THAT  
THE BOSS  
KEEPS TALKING  
ABOUT

AND  
YOU?



FOXHOUND  
REVOLVER  
OCELOT

Kazushige Nojima

SPECIAL  
OPERATIONS  
FOXHOUND...

...REVOLVER  
OCELOT!

I'VE BEEN  
WAITING FOR  
YOU, SOLID  
SNAKE.

NOW WE'LL  
SEE IF THE  
MAN CAN LIVE  
UP TO THE  
LEGEND!

To be continued...

# AN UNCOMMON STEW

BY NICHOLAS KNIGHT

Six years ago I had the fortune—or misfortune?—of attending one of Randolph Brackenmire's elite charity dinner soirees on the coldest Halloween in Gtayville's recorded history. The party was actually the inaugural occurrence of what would become an annual event in the small, quiet town. Truthfully, I'm not usually privy to such elaborate social affairs, but my boss had regrettably been unable to attend, so she had graciously passed het invitation on to me.

Randolph Brackenmire was undeniably the wealthiest man in town. No one really knew where all of his money came from, but no one of import ever really questioned it either, seeing as how every year he treated the town elite to an unparalleled taste of the fabulously rich lifestyle. His mansion was truly magnificent in its size and décor, and every guest at his parties dressed like a glamorous movie star.

But it wasn't any of these things that threw me for a loop on the night of that first party.

It all started with the meal. . .

The meal, as I recall, was a sumptuous feast. The myriad of mouth-watering morsels were all gourmet fare, save for one—the centrepiece of the banquet was a mere stew.

I was quite surprised to discover that the stew was inarguably the best dish served that night. That's not to say that the other plates were bland—far from it. The stew was just incredibly delicious. It was understandable to me why I enjoyed it—because it was fiery hot, and I have a penchant for such foods. But everyone devoured second and third helpings of the far-from-gourmet dish!

Everyone, that is, except for our host. He ate with gusto, but abstained from ingesting the popular stew. I found this mildly peculiar.

I asked Cliff Johnson—a guest that I knew to have numerous private associations with the host—what he might know of Mr. Brackenmire's eating habits.

"Actually, I asked him about the stew not ten minutes ago," he replied. "He told me that he made it so often, that he preferred to watch his guests

enjoy it, since he could have it at any time. His response seemed reasonable enough to me."

"To me as well," I said.

After dinner, I approached Mr. Brackenmire and inquired as to the ingredients of the stew.

"That is a question often asked," he replied with a queer chuckle, "but never answered." I pressed him, so he continued. "It's an old family recipe that I've spiced up with a secret ingredient."

He would say no more.

. . .

Dancing soon followed, and I found myself in the clutches of the young Widow Hayward. As far as I knew, Joan Hayward hadn't so much as smiled at a man in the two years since her husband's untimely passing. Yet there she was, groping me on the dance floor. I hastily looked around to see if anyone had noticed her behavior, but all I discovered were other couples whose embraces far exceeded the frankness of ours.

I felt my body tense. Joan took it as a sign to press even harder against me. She didn't realize that it wasn't arousal coursing through my veins. . . but rather something more akin to dread.

Still, I was attracted to her, and I soon found myself forgetting about the weird feeling I'd had.

The next thing I knew, our host was bidding us all a good night. It crossed my mind that he had noticed how amorous his guests had become, and wished us to leave before things went too far.

But things did go too far.

Joan and I didn't make it past her car before we gave in to our base needs. Some couples didn't even make it to their cars, while others who had, didn't bother entering them. The large driveway, which circled a fountain with frigid water spraying onto a near-frozen pool, was alive with writhing bodies accentuated by exposed flesh goose-bumped and chafed in ugly shades of blue and red.

As I later walked past parked cars with fogged windows on the way to my own vehicle, I came upon two men and a woman. The men were viciously beating each other, while raving about who'd seen

the woman first. Disturbingly, the woman appeared to be enjoying the savage display, her squeals of delight punctuated by her misted breath.

On my drive home I noticed several cars pulled off to the side, all of which were pitching to and fro. Still basking in the afterglow of my own encounter, I found myself grinning as I passed these vehicles.

I rounded a bend in the road and my headlights illuminated a view that caused my grin to falter. A man whom I recognized from the dinner party was in Farmer Jake's pasture. He ran around naked, covered in blood. In his wake were countless mutilated bits and pieces of what might have once been cows or sheep.

Mesmerized by the horrific sight, I failed to notice the next curve in the road. . .

. . .

I awoke the next day in the county hospital. Sheriff Riley informed me that I'd been found with the front end of my car wrapped around an old elm. Somehow I'd managed to come out of it with only minor scrapes and bruises, and a mild concussion.

"Did you catch Bill Radner?" I asked groggily.

"Bill Radner?" The sheriff looked confused, though his voice sounded strained. "I assume he's in his office." Bill Radner was, coincidentally, the head of the hospital. "—but why on Earth would I want to 'catch' him?"

"Because he massacred those animals—last night, after the party? Right near where you found me."

"Well, of course we saw the remains of those unfortunate animals—but they were obviously attacked by a wolf."

"But I saw him! He was covered in blood!"

"You must have hit your head pretty hard," Sheriff Riley chuckled, then turned serious. "I'd advise you not to voice such unfounded, slanderous accusations again. Bill Radner is an upstanding citizen—as is everyone who was at Brackenmire's house last night."

Incidentally, the Sheriff had also attended the dinner party.

. . .

Being a dedicated journalist, I ignored Sheriff Riley's warning, and included all of the details of the night's sordid events in my write-up for the newspaper I worked for. Unfortunately, my editor refused to print my article.

Evidently, she'd had lunch at Brackenmire's shortly before I'd turned in my assignment. He'd invited her over since he'd felt bad that she'd missed out the night before. Of course, she raved about how divine the food was—even though it was reheated leftovers—and, predictably, she particularly enjoyed the stew.

Based on the details so graciously provided by Randolph Brackenmire, my editor rewrote my article. And she told me in no uncertain terms that I was not to spread my version of the truth around if I wished to keep my job with the newspaper.

There was definitely something amiss in Grayville, and it seemed that I'd have to keep my search for proof under wraps for fear of losing my job. . . and for fear of losing considerably more than just my job.

. . .

After that night, I made it my business to patrol the area around Brackenmire's estate during every one of his now-famous Halloween parties. Every year, without fail, there were odd, inexplicable occurrences that went conveniently unreported—violent rapes, deadly brawls, missing children, and mutilated animals being the most common. Nonetheless, there were others who saw and heard things (regular folk like me, who weren't part of the elite guest list), and the whispered gossip around town was that Randolph Brackenmire was some sort of warlock. I investigated persistently, but kept my findings to myself.

Then, on the night of Randolph Brackenmire's seventh dinner party, one of his aides caught me peering through a side window. Instead of sounding the alarm, he appeared quite glad to see me—relieved, even. He motioned for me to go around to the back door, and I obliged. After all those years of spying, I knew my big break was before me. I shivered in the chill evening air as I waited for the aide, Dashed, to open the door. Deep in my gut something told me to run away while I still could.

The door swung open with a slight creak, forestalling any further thoughts of turning back. When Dashed admitted me, he glanced anxiously over his shoulder as if worried about discovery.

He led me stealthily through the house. Every time I tried to speak, to ask him about his secretive employer, he shushed me with one gnarled finger. Once we were away from the sounds of servants and houseguests, Dashed finally allowed me to speak.

I chose the direct route: "Is Brackenmire some sort of warlock or mad scientist or what?"

He answered my question with several of his own. Odd questions poured out of him in an unnaturally shrill voice that somehow managed to hover just above a whisper. "What are your beliefs," he asked, "concerning the worlds—the dimensions—beyond our own?" It was evident that he did not expect me to answer, as he continued on without pausing. "And what are your impressions of the things that seem to lurk in the shadows and hover just outside our lines of sight?" The questions

grew more unfathomable—bordering on absurd, even—as he led me through countless dark halls and down dimly lit stairwells.

"And what of our five meager senses?" he asked as he paused to light a candle, before taking us further into the bowels of the imposing old mansion. "Do you not think that there are things that are too vastly complex for us to even perceive, much less comprehend? Or perhaps we can sense these other beings, but blindly force them into the deepest recesses of our subconscious?"

We entered what appeared to be a library of sorts; yet why Brackenmire would have a library in the sub-basement was beyond me. There emanated a subtle, nauseatingly dank stench of dirt and mold. Dashed stopped spewing his gibberish, and I thought that perhaps he'd finished. I opened my mouth to speak, perhaps even to answer his questions in my own fashion. But no, he had not finished. After turning on some lights, he stepped up close to me and locked his unblinking eyes on mine.

"Mr. Brackenmire has always believed that weird and wonderful, unapproachable worlds subsist in tandem with ours," Dashed said in a tone nearing reverence. "And he found a way to smash through the barriers! Ah, you think I am playing with your mind—I am not." His expression practically dared me to dispute him. "Tonight, Randolph will complete the transformation of the town's elite. . .

"He has harnessed the power of these ethereal entities—demons, if you will—and he is creating human-demon crossbreeds like nothing any living creature has ever seen. The stew that you yourself partook of is how he will control his demon-spawn. Brackenmire feeds on the brains of chi-demons that he has conjured, captured, and killed, while incorporating the remains into his intoxicating stew. This way, after the transformations, his subjects will become metaphysical extensions of himself."

My natural reaction was to protest, but Dashed spoke with such fervor that I could not articulate an adequate response. Instead, I broke eye contact and looked down at my feet. It disquieted me to discover that I stood in the center of a pentagram outlined in stone. In front of me was a table covered with numerous jars, all of which contained various organic matter, gelatinous substances, and items that unmistakably resembled human innards. I looked around the subterranean library, filled with countless books on such subjects as witchcraft and summoning evil spirits, and my incredulity gave way to trepidation.

"I must kill them all," Dashed said matter-of-factly, "because once they're transformed, mere bullets will not stop them."

"What?" It had felt surreal to hear him talk about demons and parallel universes, but to hear him speak of cold-blooded murder with such great conviction. . . it made things all too real. "I'm not going to stand by and let you murder innocent people!"

I stepped toward him with the intent of pulling the older man's arms behind his back. I glanced around for something to bind his wrists with and that was my downfall, for that's when I felt a gun barrel at my temple.

"Once they ingest their seventh helping of the demon stew on this All Hallows' Eve, they will be anything but innocent! And besides," Dashed said as he pressed the gun harder into my skull, "you will not stop me. I have left you alive thus far because you can be useful to me. Useful, but not essential. Your purpose tonight will be to bear witness to the evil that lurks in our midst. When this is all over, you will tell the world about what you saw—and hopefully keep me out of jail in the process."

"And in the event that I fail, you must stop them—stop him! The Horn of the Ancient Evil is the conduit to the beyond; it is his only weakness."

"Now," he said. He pulled the gun away from my head and motioned to the doorway with it. "Come with me. It is time."

As he led me through the dark house, I considered dashing off down one of the adjoining corridors, but every time I lengthened the gap, he'd catch up and press the gun into my lower back as a silent reminder.

He pushed and prodded me until we arrived at a balcony overlooking the great ballroom. Below, the dinner party was in full swing. A putrescent aroma permeated the air.

The smell wasn't the only thing that was off. There was something odd about the parties, too. At first I thought my mind was playing tricks on me. But no, what I saw was real. Seated around the table were creatures that could only be described as abominations. They looked almost human, but their bodies were severely disfigured and their eyes were like dark, burning embers. Their hands were clawed, and evidently inadequate for manipulating utensils, as they'd all succumbed to pouring their stew straight into their engorged mouths.

Hideous almost beyond recognition was the lord of the manor himself, Randolph Brackenmire. I had not seen him up close since the party I'd attended, so I could not be completely sure if it was him, save for the fact that the monstrosity was seated at the head of the table, wearing the tattered remains of Brackenmire's signature monogrammed dinner jacket. I could hardly bear the sight of him—so unpleasant was this gross caricature of a human



being with its mottled, blue-veined skin, deeply sunken eyes, and oversized appendages, that I had to avert my eyes just to keep my lunch from coming back up for dinner.

I pressed my eyes closed, welcoming the escape from the nightmare before me. To my dismay, in the darkness I became all the more aware of the disturbing sounds that came from the table—unearthly grunts and moans in place of typical human chatter. Over the guttural din, there arose a chanting. It reminded me of Latin, but none of the words were at all familiar.

I opened my eyes and forced myself to once again take in the horrid scene. The incantation appeared to come from Brackenmire, for his cracked, pus-oozing lips moved in sync with the words, though the voice was much deeper and grating than that of the man I'd known.

As he chanted, the thing that had once been Brackenmire raised a glowing rod to his forehead. I should have run then, but morbid curiosity held me rapt. The glowing rod could only be the Horn of the Ancient Evil—though it was not at all what I'd expected. It was a magnificent spiraled horn such as that of the magical unicorns, and not the sinister gnarled specimen I'd anticipated. But the horn quickly took on more menacing aspects. As it neared Brackenmire's flesh, tendrils shot out of the horn's base, and tore into him with a sickening ripping-slurping sound.

A shot rang out beside me. Then another, and another.

I didn't need to look around to know that Dashed had pulled the trigger. The instinct to save the "innocent" party-goers' lives didn't reenter my mind.

Though I felt some sadness for the loss of the town's elite, the overpowering emotion was relief. Indeed, an actual sigh of relief escaped my lips as I watched my companion fell each quasi-human in turn. The uninjured ones looked around briefly, then unconcernedly continued shoving food into their gaping maws. Whether they no longer possessed the intelligence to process the deaths of their fellows, or whether they no longer possessed any fear mechanisms, I could not be sure. Regardless of the source of their apathy, it ultimately caused their demise, as Dashed in due course exterminated all of them.

All, that is, except for Brackenmire. Absorbed in his own unnatural transformation, Brackenmire had failed to notice the slaughter of his minions. Dashed took careful aim, and shot the beast in the head, just missing the accursed horn.

The demon let out a shriek of rage, and jumped up from its seat. Brackenmire had been a large man at six-foot-six, but this creature was at least twice that size. With a powerful thrust of its hooved feet, the demon leapt right up to the balcony and seized Dashed by the neck.

Acting on survival instinct and a surge of immeasurable adrenaline, I lunged at the horn. It burned my hands, but I wrapped my fingers around it and refused to let go. At first the demon ignored me while it throttled its former employee. But then I gave the horn a good yank, and the beast roared in anguish. The horn grew hotter. I screamed in pain, but did not let go. I ignored the smell of my own burnt flesh and tightened my grip. Just as I delivered a full-bodied tug on the horn, the demon bashed me against the wall and the world went black.

• • •

What followed is unclear, unless you believe what the authorities have to say on the matter. The police responded to reports of shots fired at the Brackenmire estate. What they found were the decimated bodies of several local elite, including Brackenmire, along with one decapitated aide and one unconscious journalist. They didn't arrest me, though they considered charging me as an accomplice to Dashed's murderous rampage. I did not disclose much of what I'd witnessed, since my purposely vague questions to the officers at the scene had revealed that the police had indeed found human corpses—not demon-spawns. Moreover, I suspected they'd be skeptical of the truth; and I had no desire to spend the rest of my days in psychiatric wards.

Unfortunately, I do know the truth. I sometimes try to convince myself that the candle Dashed had used to light out way into the depths was actually some sort of hallucinogenic incense. I wish I could believe that—it would help me overcome the waking nightmare that my life has become. I am no longer able to feel completely at ease. Whenever I am out at night, I hear the whispers of unthinkable evil calling out from the shadows; I feel the bone-chilling caresses of otherworldly wraiths. Even in my own home, I am never truly alone.

There is but one thing that prevents me from believing my own tantalizing lie of hallucinogens—the fact that the police's scientists could never explain the source of the glow that still emanates from the twisted horn they found in my hands the night Randolph Brackenmire died.

END



# THE COLDEST OF SCANS

COLDKILLER-DCP

